



*Hare Teapot* by Ken Ferguson, USA (1990) | PC126

# Incidentally Iconic

THE CLAY STUDIO COLLECTION

by  
HEATH BALLOWE

TheClayStudio



*Ganesh* by Jagdish Pandit, Bihar, India (2003) | PC101



**The Clay Studio** originally did not intend to have a collection. It was not part of the mission in 1974 when an educator from Moore College of Art and Design and some select students came together to establish the organization. But when the institution began to gain a worldwide reputation, and invited some of the most important and innovative artists working in clay from around the world to visit, some objects were generously left behind.

The Clay Studio is a home for makers of all levels, from beginners to veteran artists. As artists work through the night in the well-used studio spaces, most have no idea that there is a wildly diverse and valuable collection beneath their feet, but that is now beginning to change.





**In the Summer of 2016,** The Clay Studio was the recipient of a grant from the Luce Foundation for American Art. With that grant, the process of cataloguing The Clay Studio Collection began. Dr. Nicole Cook and myself sat in the dimly lit basement surrounded by treasures, not sure where to start, and not even certain the job of cataloguing the entire collection was an attainable goal.



*10 Heads* by Judy Moonelis, USA (1997) | PC516



*Light Gatherer* by Rudolf Staffel, USA (1990) | PC421



*Vessel* by Karen Karnes, USA | PC205

**When cataloguing a collection** like the one at The Clay Studio, there are bound to be surprises, so we rolled up our sleeves and dug in. Early on we were sometimes left completely in awe, as we dusted off old unmarked boxes, uncovering work that few had seen in decades, and in some cases didn't even know existed — works by iconic American ceramic artists such as Karen Karnes, Ken Ferguson, Ron Nagle, Richard Notkin, Judy Moonelis, Rudolf Staffel and Lucy Lewis. We spent time delicately dusting and documenting each object. When it came time to return them to the labyrinth of collection shelves, we carefully labeled them and recorded each location in our new database.





*Dream Crow* by Pēteris Martinsons, Latvia (1991) | PC066

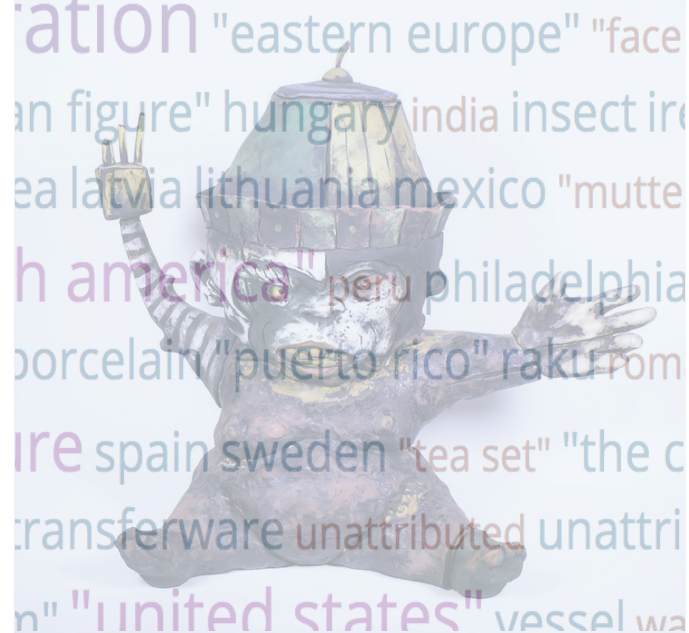
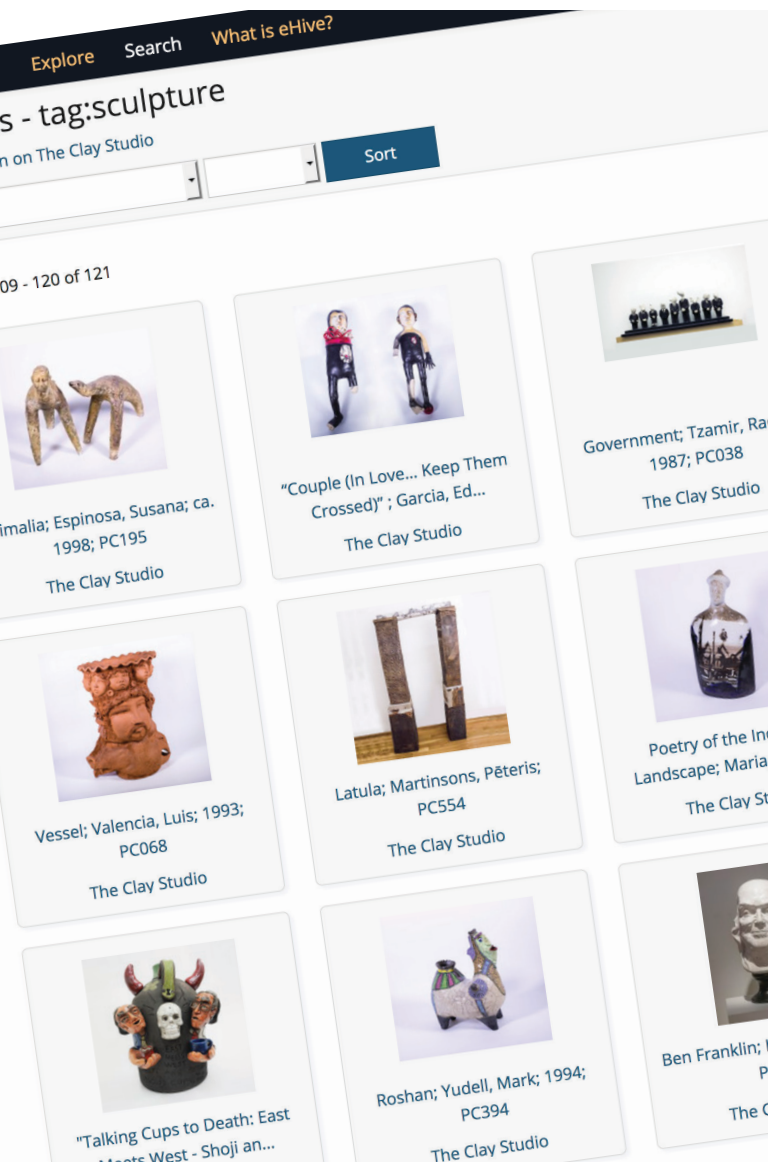


*"Dog Family"* by Karel Pauzer, Czechoslovakia (1991) | PC553



*Can't Be* by Juris Bergins, Latvia (1989) | PC001

**As we slowly worked our way** from one section of the basement to another, we began uncovering the work acquired when former Director, Jimmy Clark, undertook the goal of exhibiting ceramics from Eastern Europe for the first time in the United States. In a world just beginning to emerge from the Cold War, Jimmy was able to import a wildly diverse group of objects, ranging from Karel Pauzer's *Dog Family* (1991) to Pēteris Martinsons' *Dream Crow* (1991), opening the eyes of American audiences to a region of ceramic artwork they had never seen before.



**We now find ourselves** nearly two years later, and The Clay Studio Collection has been meticulously catalogued and photographed. For the first time all 786 objects can be seen in our public, online database.

From the beginning of the cataloguing process, it was always the intention to make The Clay Studio Collection public. The Clay Studio community has deep roots in Philadelphia, and from the beginning has been a place for artists to work and learn, and there is really no greater way to learn to make art than to view it and touch it. With the Collection publicly accessible in our online database, we have made a major stride toward fulfilling the mission of the Collection.





**For the moment,** The Clay Studio Collection remains physically in storage, difficult for the public to access. However, with The Clay Studio's exciting plans to build a new center to accommodate all of our growing programs, the Collection will be given the space it deserves. With this huge change, The Clay Studio Collection will be publicly viewable to each and every person who enters the doors of The Clay Studio. When this happens The Clay Studio Collection will become an asset to makers and historians everywhere.

The Clay Studio's goal has always been to offer its students educational opportunities that simply can't be had anywhere else, and eventually we hope The Clay Studio Collection will become a unique resource for artists and researchers to better understand how ceramic art is made.



**Heath Ballowe** served as project coordinator of The Clay Studio Collection Cataloging Project. He is an artist and historian specializing in decorative arts. He received his MFA in 2010 from Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) with a focus in Printmaking.



**Dr. Nicole Cook** served as project coordinator of The Clay Studio Collection Cataloging Project. She also serves as Project Coordinator for Academic Partnerships at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She received her PhD in 2016 from the University of Delaware, and received her MA in Art History from Temple University in 2010.

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If you have not yet visited The Clay Studio Collection Online Database, we hope you will take the time to see the wide-ranging catalogue of works included in the collection on eHive:

[ehive.com/collections/6630/the-clay-studio](http://ehive.com/collections/6630/the-clay-studio)

The Clay Studio

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